

THE BRITISH ACADEMY

SECOND ANNUAL PHILOSOPHICAL LECTURE
HENRIETTE HERTZ TRUST

H. Burn, B.S.B.

The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul

By

Professor John Burnet, LL.D.

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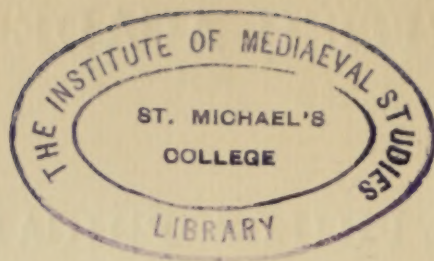
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THE SOCRATIC DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL

BY PROFESSOR JOHN BURNET, LL.D.

January 26, 1916

MY LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

When the President and Council did me the honour of inviting me to deliver the Annual Philosophical Lecture, and when they asked me to take Socrates as my subject, they were, of course, aware that the treatment of such a theme must be largely philological and historical. I, certainly, have no claim to be regarded as a philosopher, but I have tried hard to understand what Socrates was and what he did, and I conceive that to be a question of genuine philosophical interest. Whatever else it is, philosophy, in one aspect of it, is the progressive effort of man to find his true place in the world, and that aspect must be treated historically, since it is part of human progress, and philologically, since it involves the interpretation of documents. I am not afraid, then, of the objection that most of what I have to say to-day is history rather than philosophy. We are men, not angels, and for many of us our best chance of getting a glimpse of things on their eternal side is to approach them along the path of time. Moreover, some of us have what may be called a sense of loyalty to great men. In a way, no doubt, it does not matter whether we owe a truth to Pythagoras or Socrates or Plato, but it is natural for us to desire to know our benefactors and keep them in grateful remembrance. I make no apology, therefore, for the historical character of much that I have to lay before you, and I shall begin by stating the problem in a strictly historical form.

I

In a letter to the philosopher Themistius, the Emperor Julian says :

The achievements of Alexander the Great are outdone in my eyes by Socrates son of Sophroniscus. It is to him I ascribe the wisdom of Plato, the fortitude of Antisthenes, the generalship of Xenophon,

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the Eretriac and Megaric philosophies, with Cebes, Simmias, Phaedo and countless others. To him too we owe the colonies that they planted, the Lyceum, the Stoa and the Academies. Who ever found salvation in the victories of Alexander? . . . Whereas it is thanks to Socrates that all who find salvation in philosophy are being saved even now.¹

These words of Julian's are still true, and that is partly why there is so little agreement about Socrates. The most diverse philosophies have sought to father themselves upon him, and each new account of him tends to reflect the fashions and prejudices of the hour. At one time he is an enlightened deist, at another a radical atheist. He has been lauded as the father of scepticism and again as the high priest of mysticism; as a democratic social reformer and as a victim of democratic intolerance and ignorance. He has even been claimed—with at least equal reason—as a Quaker. No wonder that his latest biographer, H. Maier, exclaims:

In the presence of each fresh attempt to bring the personality of Socrates nearer to us, the impression that always recurs is the same: 'The man whose influence was so widespread and so profound cannot have been like that!' ²

Unfortunately that is just the impression left on me by Maier's own bulky volume, though he has mastered the material and his treatment of it is sound as far as it goes. Unless we can find some other line of approach, it looks as if Socrates must still remain for us the Great Unknown.

That, to be sure, is not Maier's view. He thinks he knows a great deal about Socrates, or he would not have written 600 pages and more about him. The conclusion he comes to is that Socrates was not, properly speaking, a philosopher, which makes it all the more remarkable that the philosophers of the next generation, however much they differed in other respects, all agreed in regarding Socrates as their master. Maier makes much of the differences between the Socratic schools and urges that these could not have arisen if Socrates had been a philosopher with a system of his own. There seems to be something in that at first sight, but it only makes it more puzzling that these philosophers should have wished to represent their philosophies as Socratic at all. In modern times the most inconsistent philosophies have been called Cartesian or Kantian or Hegelian, but in these cases we can usually make out how they were derived from

¹ 264 c.

² H. Maier, *Sokrates, sein Werk und seine geschichtliche Stellung* (Tübingen, 1913), p. 3.

Descartes, Kant, or Hegel respectively. Each of these thinkers had set up some new principle which was then applied in divergent and even contradictory ways by their successors, and we should expect to find that Socrates did something of the same kind. Zeller, from whom most of us have learned, thought he knew what it was. Socrates discovered the universal and founded the *Begriffsphilosophie*. Maier will have nothing to do with that, and I rather think he is wise. The evidence does not bear examination, and in any case the hypothesis would only account for Plato (if it would even do that). The other Socratics remain unexplained. If, however, we are to be deprived of this ingenious construction, we want something to replace it, and for this we look to Maier in vain. He tells us that Socrates was not a philosopher in the proper sense of the word, but only a moral teacher with a distinctive method of his own, that of 'dialectical protreptic'. In other words, his 'philosophy' was nothing more than his plan of making people good by arguing with them in a peculiar way. Surely the man whose influence has been so great 'cannot have been like that!'

Now it is clearly impossible to discuss the Socratic question in all its bearings within the limits of a single lecture, so what I propose to do is to take Maier as the ablest and most recent advocate of the view that Socrates was not really a philosopher, and to apply the Socratic method of reasoning from admissions made by the other side. If we try to see where these will lead us, we may possibly reach conclusions Maier himself has failed to draw, and these will be all the more cogent if based solely on evidence he allows to be valid. He is a candid writer, and the assumptions he makes are so few that, if a case can be made out on these alone, it stands a fair chance of being a sound one. The experiment seemed at least worth trying, and the result of it was new to myself at any rate, so it may be new to others.

I resolved not to quarrel, then, with Maier's estimate of the value of our sources. He rejects the testimony of Xenophon, who did not belong to the intimate Socratic circle, and who was hardly more than twenty-five years old when he saw Socrates for the last time. He also disallows the evidence of Aristotle, who came to Athens as a lad of eighteen thirty years after the death of Socrates, and who had no important sources of information other than those accessible to ourselves. That leaves us with Plato as our sole witness, but Maier does not accept his testimony in its entirety. Far from it. For reasons I need not discuss, since I propose to accept his conclusion as a basis

for argument, he holds that we must confine ourselves to Plato's earliest writings, and he particularly singles out the *Apology* and *Crito*, to which he adds the speech of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. In these two works, and in that single portion of a third, he holds that Plato had no other intention than 'to set the Master's personality and lifework before our eyes without additions of his own'.¹ This does not mean, observe, that the *Apology* is a report of the speech actually delivered by Socrates at his trial, or that the conversation with Crito in the prison ever took place. It simply means that the Socrates we learn to know from these sources is the real man, and that Plato's sole object so far was to preserve a faithful memory of him. Maier uses other early dialogues too, but he makes certain reservations about them which I wish to avoid discussing. I prefer to take his admissions in the strictest sense and with all the qualifications he insists on. The issue, then, takes this form: 'What could we know of Socrates as a philosopher if no other account of him had come down to us than the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the speech of Alcibiades, and with the *proviso* that even these are not to be regarded as reports of actual speeches or conversations?' I should add that Maier also allows us to treat the allusions in contemporary comedy as corroborative evidence, though they must be admitted with caution. Such are the conditions of the experiment I resolved to try.

III

In the first place, then, we learn from the *Apology* and *Crito* that Socrates was just over seventy when he was put to death in the spring of 399 B. C., and that means that he was born in 470 or 469 B. C. He was, then, a man of the Periclean Age. He was already ten years old when Aeschylus brought out the Orestean Trilogy, and about thirty when Sophocles and Euripides were producing their earliest tragedies. He must have watched the building of the new Parthenon from start to finish. We are far too apt to see Socrates against the more sombre background of those later days to which Plato and Xenophon belonged, and to forget that he was over forty when Plato was born. If we wish to understand him historically, we must first replace him among the surroundings of his own generation. In other words, we must endeavour to realize his youth and early manhood.

To most people Socrates is best known by his trial and death, and that is why he is commonly pictured as an old man. It is not always remembered, for instance, that the Socrates caricatured by Aristophanes in the *Clouds* is a man of forty-six, or that the Socrates who

¹ p. 147.

served at Potidaea (432 B.C.) in a manner that would have won him the V.C. to-day was about thirty-seven. On that occasion he saved the life of Alcibiades, who must have been twenty at least, or he would not have been on active service abroad. Even if we assume that Potidaea was his first campaign, Alcibiades was eighteen years younger than Socrates at the very outside, and his speech in the *Symposium* carries us still further back, to the time when he was about fifteen.¹ In reading the account he is made to give of the beginning of his intimacy with Socrates, we are reading of a boy's enthusiasm for a man just turned thirty. The story makes a different impression if we keep that in view. What concerns us now, however, is that the 'wisdom' of Socrates is assumed to be matter of common knowledge in these early days. It was just because he had some strange, new knowledge to impart that Alcibiades sought to win his affection.² We shall see the bearing of that shortly.

From the *Apology* we learn further that Socrates conceived himself to have a mission to his fellow-citizens, and that his devotion to it had brought him to poverty. He cannot have been really poor to begin with; for we have found him serving before Potidaea, which means that he had the property qualification required at the time for those who served as hoplites. Nine years later (423 B.C.), however, when Aristophanes and Amipsias represented him on the comic stage, it appears that his neediness was beginning to be a byword. They both allude to what seems to have been a current joke about his want of a new cloak and the shifts he was put to to get one. Amipsias said he was 'born to spite the shoemakers', but Socrates may have had other reasons than poverty for going barefoot. In the same fragment he is addressed as a 'stouthearted fellow that, for all his hunger, never stooped to be a parasite'. Two years later, Eupolis used stronger language. He calls Socrates a 'garrulous beggar, who has ideas on everything except where to get a meal'. Of course we must not take this language too seriously. Socrates was still serving as a hoplite at Delium, the year before the *Clouds* of Aristophanes and the *Connus* of Amipsias, and at Amphipolis the year after. Something, however, must have happened shortly before to bring him into public notice, or the comic poets would not all have turned on him at once, and it is also clear that he had suffered losses of some kind.

¹ In passing from the story of his first intimacy with Socrates to that of Potidaea, Alcibiades says ταῦτά τε γάρ μοι ἅπαντα προυγεγόνει, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα κτλ., 'That was an old story, but at a later time, &c.' (*Symp.* 219 e, 5).

² He thought it would be a stroke of luck πάντ' ἀκούσαι ὅσαπερ οὗτος ᾗδει (*Symp.* 217 a, 4).

Very likely these were due to the war in the first place, but the *Apology* makes him poorer still at the close of his life, and he is made to attribute that to his mission. We may infer, I think, that the public mission of Socrates had begun before the year of the *Clouds*, but was still something of a novelty then, so that its nature was not clearly understood. He was absent from Athens, as we know, the year before, and presumably in the preceding years also, though we do not happen to hear of any actual battle in which he took part between Potidaea and Delium. We are told, however, that his habit of meditation was a joke in the army before Potidaea, and that it was there he once stood wrapped in thought for twenty-four hours.¹ It looks as if the call came to him when he was in the trenches; and, if so, the mission cannot have become the sole business of his life till after Delium, when he was forty-five years old. Now we have seen that he was known for his 'wisdom' long before that, and the *Apology* confirms the speech of Alcibiades on this point. It was before Socrates entered on his mission that Chaerepho went to Delphi and asked the oracle whether there was any one wiser than Socrates, from which it follows that this 'wisdom', whatever it was, was something anterior to and quite independent of the public mission described in the *Apology*. To sum up, the evidence Maier admits is sufficient to prove that Socrates was known as a 'wise man' before he was forty, and before he began to go about questioning his fellow-citizens. Whatever we may think of the details, both the *Apology* and the speech of Alcibiades assume that as a matter of course, which is even more convincing than if it had been stated in so many words.

On the other hand, it does not seem likely that the mission of Socrates stood in no sort of relation to the 'wisdom' for which he was known in his younger days. The *Apology* does not help us here. It tells us a good deal about the mission, but nothing as to the nature of the 'wisdom' which prompted the inquiry of Chaerepho, while Alcibiades is not sufficiently sober in the *Symposium* to give us more than a hint, which would hardly be intelligible yet, but to which we shall return. It will be best, then, to start with the account given in the *Apology* of that mission to his fellow-citizens to which Socrates devoted the later years of his life, and to see whether we can infer anything from it about the 'wisdom' for which he had been known in early manhood.

¹ *Symp.* 220 c, 3 sqq. Maier says (p. 301 n.) that this obviously depends on trustworthy tradition.

IV

We are told, then, that at first Socrates refused to accept the declaration of the Pythia that he was the wisest of men, and set himself to refute it by producing some one who was certainly wiser. The result of his efforts, however, was only to show that all the people who were wise in their own eyes and those of others were really ignorant, and he concluded that the meaning of the oracle did not lie on the surface. The god must really mean that all men alike were ignorant, but that Socrates was wiser in this one respect, that he knew he was ignorant, while other men thought they were wise. Having discovered the meaning of the oracle, he now felt it his duty to champion the veracity of the god by devoting the rest of his life to the exposure of other men's ignorance.

It ought, one would think, to be obvious that this is a humorous way of stating the case. For very sufficient reasons the Delphic oracle was an object of suspicion at Athens, and, when Euripides exhibits it in an unfavourable light, he only reflects the feelings of his audience. It is incredible that any Athenian should have thought it worth while to make the smallest sacrifice in defence of an institution which had distinguished itself by its pro-Persian and pro-Spartan leanings, or that Socrates should have hoped to conciliate his judges by stating that he had ruined himself in such a cause. We might as well expect a jury of English Nonconformists to be favourably impressed by the plea that an accused person had been reduced to penury by his advocacy of Papal Infallibility.

On this point recent German critics have an inkling of the truth, though they draw quite the wrong conclusions. Several of them have made the profound discovery that the speech Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates is not a defence at all, and was not likely to conciliate the court. They go on to infer that he cannot have spoken like that, and some of them even conclude that the whole story of the oracle is Plato's invention. That is because they start with the conviction that Socrates must have tried to make out the best case he could for himself. 'He only needed,' says Maier,¹ 'to appeal to the correctness with which he had always fulfilled the religious duties of an Athenian citizen. Xenophon's *Apology* makes him speak thus. And he certainly did speak thus.' The inference is characteristically German, but the Socrates we think we know from the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the speech of Alcibiades would never have stooped to do anything of the sort. He was not afraid of the State, as German

¹ p. 105.

professors occasionally are. He certainly admitted its right to deal with its citizens as it thought fit, but that is a very different thing from recognizing its title to control their freedom of thought and speech. The Socrates of the *Crito* insists, indeed, that a legally pronounced sentence must be executed, and that he must therefore submit to death at the hands of the State; but we misunderstand him badly if we fail to see that he asserts even more strongly his right not to degrade himself by a humiliating defence, or to make things easy for his accusers by running away, which is just what they wanted him to do. No. Each party must abide by the sentence pronounced; Socrates must die, and his accusers must lie under condemnation for wickedness and dishonesty. That is what he is made to say in the *Apology*,¹ and he adds that so it was bound to be.

Even Xenophon, who does put forward the plea of religious conformity on behalf of Socrates, shows rather more insight than the Germans. In his own *Apology* he admits that other accounts of the speech—Plato's, of course, in particular—had succeeded in reproducing the lofty tone (*μεγαλληγορία*) of Socrates. He really did speak like that, he says,² and he was quite indifferent to the result of the trial. Unfortunately this is immediately spoilt by a complaint that no one had accounted for his indifference, so that it seemed 'rather unwise', just as it does to the Germans. Xenophon's own view, which he modestly attributes to Hermogenes, is that Socrates wished to escape the evils of old age by a timely death. He did not want to become blind and hard of hearing. It has not been given either to Xenophon or to the Germans to see that the only thing to be expected of a brave man accused on a trumped-up charge is just that tone of humorous condescension and *persiflage* which Plato has reproduced. As we shall see, there are serious moments in the *Apology* too, but the actual defence is rather a provocation than a plea for acquittal. That is just why we feel so sure that the speech is true to life.

We need not doubt, then, that Socrates actually gave some such account of his mission as that we read in the *Apology*, though we must keep in view the 'ironical' character of this part of the speech. Most English critics take it far too seriously. They seem to think the message of Socrates to his fellow-citizens can have been nothing more than is there revealed, and that his sole business in life was to expose the ignorance of others. If that had really been all, it is surely hard

¹ 39 b, 4 sqq.

² Xen. *Apol.* 1 ᾧ καὶ δῆλον ὅτι τῷ ὄντι οὕτως ἔρρηθη ὑπὸ Σωκράτους. Plato was present at the trial, but Xenophon was 'somewhere in Asia'.

to believe that he would have been ready to face death rather than relinquish his task. No doubt Socrates held that the conviction of ignorance was the first step on the way of salvation, and that it was little use talking of anything else to people who had still this step to take, but even Xenophon, whom these same critics generally regard as an authority on 'the historical Socrates', represents him as a teacher of positive doctrine. It ought to be possible to discover what this was even from the *Apology* itself.

V

We must not assume, indeed, that Socrates thought it worth while to say much about his real teaching at the trial, though it is likely that he did indicate its nature. There were certainly some among his five hundred judges who deserved to be taken seriously. Even if he did not do this, however, Plato was bound to do it for him, if he wished to produce the effect he obviously intended to produce. As a matter of fact, he has done it quite unmistakably, and the only reason why the point is usually missed is that we find it hard to put ourselves in the place of those to whom such doctrine was novel and strange.

The passage which lets us into the secret is that where Socrates is made to tell his judges that he will not give up what he calls 'philosophy', even though they were to offer to acquit him on that condition. Here, if anywhere, is the place where we look for a statement of the truth for which he was ready to die, and Plato accordingly makes him give the sum and substance of his 'philosophy' in words which have obviously been chosen with the greatest care, and to which all possible emphasis is lent by the solemnity of the context and by the rhetorical artifice of repetition. What Socrates is made to say is this :

I will not cease from philosophy and from exhorting you, and declaring the truth to every one of you I meet, saying in the words I am accustomed to use : 'My good friend, . . . are you not ashamed of caring for money and how to get as much of it as you can, and for honour and reputation, and not caring or taking thought for wisdom and truth and for your soul, and how to make it as good as possible ?'

And again :

I go about doing nothing else but urging you, young and old alike, not to care for your bodies or for money sooner or as much as for your soul, and how to make it as good as you can.¹

'To care for their souls,' then, was what Socrates urged on his fellow-citizens, and we shall have to consider how much that implies.

¹ 29 d, 4 sqq., and 30 a, 7 sqq.



First, however, it should be noted that there are many echoes of the phrase in all the Socratic literature. Xenophon uses it in contexts which do not appear to be derived from Plato's dialogues. Antisthenes, it seems, employed the phrase too, and he would hardly have borrowed it from Plato. Isocrates refers to it as something familiar.¹ The Athenian Academy possessed a dialogue which was evidently designed as a sort of introduction to Socratic philosophy for beginners, and is thrown into the appropriate form of a conversation between Socrates and the young Alcibiades. It is not, I think, by Plato, but it is of early date. In it Socrates shows that, if any one is to care rightly for himself, he must first of all know what he is; it is then proved that each of us is soul, and therefore that to care for ourselves is to care for our souls. It is all put in the most provokingly simple way, with the usual illustrations from shoemaking and the like, and it strikingly confirms what is said in the *Apology*.² I am not called upon to labour this point, however, for Maier admits, and indeed insists, that this is the characteristic Socratic formula. Let us see, then, where this admission will lead us.

Just at first, I fear, it will seem to lead nowhere in particular. Such language has become stale by repetition, and it takes an effort to appreciate it. So far as words go, Socrates has done his work too well. It is an orthodox and respectable opinion to-day that each one of us has a soul, and that its welfare is his highest interest, and that was so already in the fourth century B.C., as we can see from Isocrates. We assume without examination that a similar vague orthodoxy on the subject existed in the days of Socrates too, and that there was nothing very remarkable in his reiteration of it. That is why Maier, having safely reached this point, is content to inquire no further, and pronounces that Socrates was not a philosopher in the strict sense, but only a moral teacher with a method of his own. I hope to show that he has left off just where he ought to have begun.

For it is here that it becomes important to remember that Socrates belonged to the age of Pericles. We have no right to assume that his words meant just as much or as little as they might mean in Isocrates or in a modern sermon. What we have to ask is what they would mean at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War; and, if we ask that question, we shall find, I believe, that, so far from appearing commonplace, the exhortation to 'care for his soul'

¹ For references see Maier, p. 333, n. 3. The allusion in Isocrates (*Antid.* § 309) was noted by Grote (*Plato*, vol. i, p. 341).

² [Plato] *Alc.* I. 127 e, 9 sqq.

must have come as a shock to the Athenian of those days, and may even have seemed not a little ridiculous. It is implied, we must observe, that there is something in us which is capable of attaining wisdom, and that this same thing is capable of attaining goodness and righteousness. This something Socrates called 'soul' ($\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$). Now no one had ever said that before, in the sense in which Socrates meant it. Not only had the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ never been used in this way, but the existence of what Socrates called by the name had never been realized. If that can be shown, it will be easier to understand how Socrates came to be regarded as the true founder of philosophy, and our problem will be solved. This involves, of course, an inquiry into the history of the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, which may seem to be taking us a long way from Socrates, but that cannot be helped if we really wish to measure the importance of the advance he made. It will be obvious that in what follows I have been helped by Rohde's *Psyche*, but that really great work seems to me to miss the very point to which it ought to lead up. It has no chapter on Socrates at all.

VI

Originally, the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ meant 'breath', but, by historical times, it had already been specialized in two distinct ways. It had come to mean *courage* in the first place, and secondly the *breath of life*. The first sense has nothing, of course, to do with our present inquiry, but so much confusion has arisen from failure to distinguish it from the second, that it will be as well to clear the ground by defining its range. There is abundant evidence in many languages of a primitive idea that pride and courage naturally expressed themselves by hard breathing, or—not to put too fine a point upon it—snorting. Perhaps this was first observed in horses. At any rate, the phrase 'to breathe hard' ($\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha$) survived in the sense of 'to be proud', and warriors are said 'to breathe wrath' and 'to breathe Ares'. So the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ was used, just like the Latin *spiritus*, for what we still call 'high spirit'. Herodotus and the Tragedians have it often in this sense and Thucydides once.¹ From this is derived the adjective $\epsilon\upsilon\psi\upsilon\chi\omicron\varsigma$, 'spirited', 'courageous', and the 'magnanimous' man, the $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\psi\upsilon\chi\omicron\varsigma$, is properly the 'man of spirit'. It is clear that, if we wish to discover what Socrates really meant by $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, when he called the seat of wisdom and goodness by

¹ Thuc. ii. 40, 3. In Herod. v. 124 we are told that Aristagoras was $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\alpha}\kappa\rho\omicron\varsigma$. From the context we see clearly that this means he was poor-spirited. I mention this because Liddell and Scott are wrong on the point.

that name, we must eliminate all instances of the word which fall under this head.

The second meaning of $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ is the 'breath of life', the presence or absence of which is the most obvious distinction between the animate and the inanimate. It is, in the first place, the 'ghost' a man 'gives up' at death, but it may also quit the body temporarily, which explains the phenomenon of swooning ($\lambda\iota\pi\omicron\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\iota}\alpha$). That being so, it seemed natural to suppose it was also the thing that can roam at large when the body is asleep, and even appear to another sleeping person in his dream. Moreover, since we can dream of the dead, what then appears to us must be just what leaves the body at the moment of death. These considerations explain the worldwide belief in the 'soul' as a sort of 'double' of the real bodily man, the Egyptian *ka*, the Italian *genius*, and the Greek $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$.

Now this 'double' is not identified with whatever it is in us that feels and wills during our waking life. That is generally supposed to be blood and not breath. Homer has a great deal to say about feelings, but he never attributes any feeling to the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$. The $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ and the $\nu\acute{o}\omicron\varsigma$, which do feel and perceive, have their seat in the midriff or the heart; they belong to the body and perish with it. In a sense, no doubt, the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ continues to exist after death, since it can appear to the survivors, but in Homer it is hardly even a ghost, since it cannot appear to them otherwise than in a dream. It is a shadow ($\sigma\kappa\iota\acute{\alpha}$) or image ($\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\nu$), with no more substance, as Apollodorus put it, than the reflection of the body in a mirror.¹ Departed souls are witless and feeble things. Tiresias is the exception that proves the rule, and in the *Nekyia* it is only when the shades have been allowed to drink blood that consciousness returns to them for a while. That is not because death has robbed the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ of anything it ever had; it had nothing to do with the conscious life when it was in the body, and cannot therefore have any consciousness when detached from it. A few favourites of heaven escape this dismal lot by being sent to the Isles of the Blest, but these do not really die at all. They are carried away still living and retain their bodies, without which they would be incapable of bliss. This point, too, is well noted by Apollodorus.²

¹ Apollodorus $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omega\nu$ (Stob. *Ecl.* i, p. 420, Wachsm.) $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\tau\acute{\iota}\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\pi\tau\omicron\rho\iota\varsigma\ \phi\alpha\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \acute{\omicron}\mu\omicron\iota\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\omega\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\delta\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\nu\ \sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\varsigma,\ \acute{\alpha}\ \kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\zeta\ \acute{\eta}\mu\acute{\iota}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\zeta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \kappa\iota\nu\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \mu\iota\mu\acute{\epsilon}\iota\tau\alpha\iota,\ \sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\epsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\acute{\omega}\delta\eta\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\nu\ \omicron\acute{\upsilon}\delta\epsilon\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\chi\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\lambda\eta\psi\iota\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\phi\acute{\eta}\nu.$

² Apollodorus, *ib.* (Stob. *Ecl.* i, p. 422) $\tau\omicron\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \omicron\acute{\upsilon}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\ \pi\alpha\rho\acute{\epsilon}\iota\nu\alpha\iota.$

VII

It is generally agreed that these views can hardly be primitive, and that the observances of the mortuary cult (τὰ νομιζόμενα), which we find practised at Athens and elsewhere, really bear witness to a far earlier stratum of belief. They show that at one time the ψυχή was supposed to dwell with the body in the grave, where it had to be supported by the offerings of the survivors, especially by libations (χοαί) poured over the tomb. It has been fairly inferred that the immunity of the Homeric world from ghosts had a good deal to do with the substitution of cremation for burial. When the body is burnt the ψυχή has no longer a foothold in this life. At any rate, the early Athenian ghost was by no means so feeble and helpless a thing as the Homeric. If a man's murder went unavenged, or if the offerings at his grave were neglected, his ghost could 'walk', and the feast of the Anthesteria preserved the memory of a time when departed souls were believed to revisit their old homes once a year. There is no trace of anything here that can be called ancestor-worship. It is something much more primitive than that. Though less helpless, and therefore more formidable, than the Homeric 'shade', the early Athenian ghost is dependent on the offerings of the survivors, and they make these offerings, partly, no doubt, from feelings of natural piety, but mainly to keep the ghost quiet. That is hardly to be called worship.

It is plain, on the other hand, that these beliefs were mere survivals in the Athens of the fifth century B. C. We should know next to nothing about them were it not that the mortuary observances become of legal importance in cases of homicide and inheritance, so that the orators had to treat them seriously, and, moreover, they went on quite comfortably side by side with the wholly inconsistent belief that departed souls all went to a place of their own. We know now that Lucian's picture of Charon and his boat faithfully reproduces the imagery of the sixth century B. C.; for it agrees exactly with the representation on a recently discovered piece of black figured pottery.¹ There we see the souls—miserable little creatures with wings—weeping on the bank and praying to be taken aboard, while Charon sits in the stern and makes all he has room for work their passage by rowing. The people who decorated a piece of pottery, obviously intended for use in the mortuary cult, with such a scene had evidently no living belief in the continued existence

¹ Furtwängler, *Charon, eine altattische Malerei* (Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, viii (1905), pp. 191 sqq.).

of the soul within the grave. We find the same contradiction in Egypt, but there both beliefs were taken seriously. The Egyptians were a business-like people, and got out of the difficulty by assuming two souls, one of which (the *ka*) remains in the tomb while the other (the *ba*) departs to the place of the dead. Similar devices were adopted elsewhere, but the Greeks felt no need for anything of the sort. We may safely infer that the old belief had lost its hold upon them.

Whichever way we take it, the traditional Athenian beliefs about the soul were cheerless enough, and we cannot wonder at the popularity of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which promised a better lot of some sort to the initiated after death. It does not appear, however, that this was at all clearly conceived. The obligation of secrecy referred to the ritual alone, and we should hear something more definite as to the future life, if the Mysteries had been explicit about it. As it is, the chorus in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes probably tell us all there was to tell, and that only amounts to a vision of meadows and feasting—a sort of glorified picnic. Of one thing we may be quite sure, namely, that no new view of the soul was revealed in the Mysteries; for in that case we should certainly find some trace of it in Aeschylus. As a matter of fact, he tells us nothing about the soul, and hardly ever mentions it. To him, as to most of his contemporaries, thought belongs to the body; it is the blood round the heart, and that ceases to think at death. The life to come has no place in his scheme of things, and that is just why he is so preoccupied with the problem of the fathers' sins being visited on the children. Justice must be done on earth or not at all.

In any case, the promises held out in the Mysteries are quite as inconsistent with the beliefs implied by the mortuary cult as are Charon and his boat, and the fact that the Eleusinia had been taken over by the state as part of the public religion shows once more how little hold such beliefs had on the ordinary Athenian. I do not mean that he actively disbelieved them, but I should suppose he thought very little about them. After all, the Athenians were brought up on Homer, and their everyday working beliefs were derived from that source. Besides, Homer was already beginning to be interpreted allegorically, and the prevailing notion in the time of Socrates certainly was that the souls of the dead were absorbed by the upper air, just as their bodies were by the earth. In the *Suppliants* Euripides gives us the formula 'Earth to earth and air to air', and that is no heresy of his own.¹ It was so much a matter of course that it had

¹ Eur. *Suppl.* 533—

πνεῦμα μὲν πρὸς αἰθέρα,
τὸ σῶμα δ' ἐς γῆν.

been embodied in the official epitaph on those who had fallen at Potidaea some years earlier (432 B.C.).¹ There is nothing remarkable in that. There was no room in the public religion for any doctrine of immortality. The gods alone are immortal, and it would be shocking to suggest that human beings might be so too. The dead are just the dead, and how can the dead be deathless? In the heroic age, indeed, some human beings had attained immortality by being turned into gods and heroes, but such things were not expected to happen now. The heroic honours paid to Brasidas at Amphipolis had a political motive, and were hardly taken seriously.

VIII

So far I have been dealing with the beliefs of the ordinary citizen and with the official religion of Athens, but it would have been easy to find people there who held very different views about the soul. There were the members of Orphic societies in the first place, and there were also the votaries of Ionian science, who had become fairly numerous since Anaxagoras first introduced it to the Athenians. On the whole, the Orphics would be found chiefly among the humbler classes, and the adherents of Ionian science chiefly among the enlightened aristocracy. Even in the absence of direct testimony we should be bound to assume that Socrates, who was interested in everything and tested everything, did not pass by the two most remarkable movements which took place at Athens in his own generation, and if we wish to replace him among the surroundings of his own time we must certainly take account of these. The religious movement was the earlier in date, and claims our attention first.

The most striking feature of Orphic belief is that it is based on the denial of what we have just seen to be the cardinal doctrine of Greek religion, namely, that there is an impassable, or almost impassable, gulf between gods and men. The Orphics held, on the contrary, that every soul is a fallen god, shut up in the prisonhouse of the body as a penalty for antenatal sin. The aim of their religion as practised was to secure the release (*λύσις*) of the soul from its bondage by means of certain observances directed to cleansing and purging it of original sin (*καθαρμοί*). Those souls which were sufficiently purged returned once more to the gods and took their old place among them.

That is certainly not primitive belief but theological speculation, such as we find among the Hindus and, in a cruder form, among the

¹ C. I. A. i. 442—

αἰθὴρ μὲν ψυχὰς ὑπεδέξατο, σώματα δὲ χθών.

Egyptians. The trouble was till recently that there seemed to be no room for an age of such speculation within the limits of Greek history as we knew it, and many modern scholars have followed the lead of Herodotus in holding that it came from the 'barbarians', and in particular from Egypt. On the other hand, Orphicism was closely bound up with the worship of Dionysus, which seems to have come from Thrace, and we can hardly credit the Thracians with a gift for mystical theology. If, however, we take a wider view, we shall find that doctrines of a similar character are to be found in many places which have nothing to do with Thrace. Zielinski has shown strong grounds for believing that the Hermetic theology, which became important in later days, originated in Arcadia, and especially in Mantinea, the home of the prophetess Diotima, who is certainly not to be regarded as a fictitious personage.¹ There were mystical elements in the worship of the Cretan Zeus, and a book of prophecies was extant in later days composed in the dialect of Cyprus, which is practically identical with the Arcadian.² The geographical distribution of the doctrine strongly suggests that we have really to do with a survival from the Aegean Age, and that the period of theological speculation we seem bound to assume was just the time of the power of Cnossus. If that is so, the priests of Heliopolis in the Delta may quite as well have borrowed from Crete as *vice versa*, if there was any borrowing at all. There is no need to look for remote origins.

However that may be, it is certain that such doctrines flourished exceedingly in the sixth century B.C., and that their influence on the higher thought of Greece was by no means negligible. We must, however, be careful to avoid exaggeration here; for, while it is certain that the Orphics attached an importance to the 'soul' which went far beyond anything recognized in the public or private religion of the Greek states, it is by no means so clear that they went much beyond primitive spiritism in the account they gave of its nature. In so far as the soul was supposed to reveal its true nature in 'ecstasy', which might be artificially produced by drugs or dancing, that is obvious; but, even in its higher manifestations, the doctrine still bears traces of its primitive origin. The earliest statement in literature of the unique divine origin of the soul is to be found in a fragment of one of Pindar's Dirges,³ but even there it is called an 'image of life'

¹ Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, ix (1906), p. 43.

² On Euklos the Cyprian see M. Schmidt in Kuhns Zeitschrift, ix (1860), pp. 361 sqq. The identity of the Arcadian and Cypriote dialects is the most certain and fundamental fact with regard to the Aegean Age.

³ Pindar, fr. 131 Bergk.

(αἰῶνος εἰδωλον) surviving after death, much in the Homeric way, and we are expressly told that it 'sleeps when the limbs are active' (εὔδει δὲ πρασόντων μελέων) and shows its prophetic nature only in dreams. In fact, as Adam said, it is rather like what has been called 'the subliminal self' in modern times, and is quite dissociated from the normal waking consciousness.¹ It may be divine and immortal, but it is really no concern of ours except in sleep and at the moment of death. It is not identified with what we call 'I'.

IX

The word ψυχή had also been used by the scientific schools of Ionia in quite another than the popular and traditional sense. This appears to have originated in the doctrine of Anaximenes, that 'air' (ἀήρ), the primary substance, was the life of the world, just as the breath was the life of the body. That doctrine was being taught at Athens by Diogenes of Apollonia in the early manhood of Socrates, who is represented as an adherent of it in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. The emphasis lies entirely on the cosmical side, however. There is no special interest in the individual human soul, which is just that portion of the boundless air which happens to be shut up in our body for the time being, and which accounts for our life and consciousness. There is a great advance on primitive views here in so far as the ψυχή is identified for the first time with the normal waking consciousness, and not with the dream-consciousness. This point is specially emphasized in the system of Heraclitus, which was based precisely on the opposition between waking and sleeping, life and death.² The waking soul is that in which the elemental fire burns bright and dry; sleep and death are due to its partial or total extinction. On the other hand, the soul is in a state of flux just as much as the body. It, too, is a river into which you cannot step twice; there is nothing you can speak of as 'I' or even 'this'. Anaxagoras preferred to call the source of motion he was obliged to postulate, νοῦς, instead of ψυχή, but for our present purpose he meant much the same thing. The common feature in all these theories is that our conscious life comes to us 'from out of doors' (θύραθεν), as Aristotle puts it, employing a term elsewhere used in describing respiration. Its existence is of a temporary and accidental character, depending solely on the fact that for the moment a portion of the primary substance is

¹ Adam, *The Doctrine of the Celestial Origin of the Soul* (Cambridge Praelections, 1906). Adam pointed out (p. 32) that Myers chose the Pindaric fragment as the heading of his chapter on Sleep (*Human Personality*, vol. i, p. 121).

² See my *Greek Philosophy, Part I, Thales to Plato*, § 41.

enclosed in a particular body. It will be seen that this fits in well enough with the view commonly accepted at Athens and expressed in the formula 'Earth to earth and air to air'. That is why no one was shocked by the scientific view. The 'sophists' were accused of almost everything, but I do not remember any place where they are blamed for failing to 'think nobly of the soul'. There was no doctrine of soul in the received religion, or none worth talking about, and there could therefore be no impiety in what the sophists taught. The Orphic doctrine was far more likely to offend current prejudices.

The Pythagoreans might, perhaps, have developed a more adequate doctrine of the soul; for they shared the religious interest of the Orphics and the scientific interests of the Ionians. As it happened, however, their musical and medical studies led them to regard it as a 'blend' (*κρᾶσις*) or 'attunement' (*ἁρμονία*) of the elements which compose the body, of which, therefore, it is merely a function.¹ Democritus went so far, indeed, as to distinguish the pleasures of the soul as more 'divine' than those of the 'tabernacle' (*σκήνος*) or body; but, since he held the soul to be corporeal, that was only a difference of degree.² On the whole, we must conclude that neither religion or philosophy in the fifth century B.C. knew anything of the Soul. What they called by that name was something extrinsic and dissociated from the normal personality, which was altogether dependent on the body.

X

In the Athenian literature of the fifth century the idea of soul is still more unknown. We might have expected that the Orphic, if not the scientific theory, would have left some trace, but even that did not happen. In a matter of this kind vague general impressions are useless, and the observations I am about to make are based on what I believe to be a complete enumeration of all instances of the word *ψυχή* in the extant Athenian literature of the fifth century, including Herodotus, who wrote mainly for Athenians. I was much surprised by the result of this inquiry, which showed that, down to the very close of the century, there is hardly an instance of the word in any other than a purely traditional sense.

In the first place, as I have said before, it often means 'high spirit' or courage, but that does not concern us for the present. In a certain number of passages it means 'ghost', but ghosts are not often mentioned. In a larger number of places it may be translated 'life', and that is where possible misunderstandings begin. It has

¹ See *ib.* § 75.

² See *ib.* § 155.



not, in fact, been sufficiently observed that *ψυχή*, in the literature of this period, never means the life of a man except when he is dying or in danger of death, or, in other words, that the Attic usage is so far the same as the Homeric. You may lose or 'give up' your *ψυχή* or you may save it; you may risk it or fight or speak in its defence; you may sacrifice it like Alcestis or cling ignobly to it like Admetus. To 'love one's *ψυχή*' is to shrink from death, and *φιλοψυχία* is a common word for cowardice. In the same sense you may say that a thing is dear as 'dear life'. As for the *ψυχαί* of other people, you may mourn them or avenge them, in which case *ψυχή* clearly means *lost* life, and may just as well be rendered 'death' as 'life'. The one thing you cannot do with a *ψυχή* is to live by it. When Theseus in Euripides¹ bids Amphitryon 'do violence to his soul', he means 'Force yourself to live', and the literal sense of his words is 'Hold in the breath of life by force' and do not let it escape. 'Refuse to give up the ghost' comes near it. Similarly, the expression 'Collect your *ψυχή*'² properly means 'Make an effort not to swoon', and implies the same idea of holding one's breath. You will search the Athenian writers of the fifth century in vain for a single instance of *ψυχή* meaning 'life', except in connexion with swooning or death.

The *ψυχή* is also spoken of in the tragedians as the seat of certain feelings, in which case we naturally render it by 'heart'. What has not been observed is that these feelings are always of a very special kind. We saw that Pindar thought of the *ψυχή* as a sort of 'subliminal self' which 'sleeps when the limbs are active', but has prophetic visions when the body is asleep. In Attic tragedy this function is generally attributed to the heart and not the 'soul', but there is one place at least where *ψυχή* seems definitely to mean the 'subconscious'. In the *Troades* the infant Astyanax, when about to die, is pitied for having had no conscious experience of the privileges of royalty. 'Thou sawest them and didst mark them in thy *ψυχή*, but thou knowest them not.'³ This seems to be the only place where knowledge of any kind is ever ascribed to the *ψυχή*, and it is expressly denied to be knowledge. It is only the vague awareness of early childhood which leaves no trace in the memory. We note the same idea in another place where something is said to strike upon the

¹ Eur. *Herc.* 1366 *ψυχὴν βιάζων*. Wilamowitz's interpretation of this is singularly perverse.

² Eur. *Herc.* 626 *σύλλογον ψυχῆς λαβὲ | τρόμου τε παῦσαι*. Cf. *Phoen.* 850 *ἀλλὰ σύλλεξον σθένος | καὶ πνεῦμ' ἄθροισον*.

³ Eur. *Tro.* 1171. See B. H. Kennedy in Tyrrell's note.

$\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ as familiar, that is, to awaken dormant memories.¹ That explains further how the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ may be made to 'smart' by being touched on the raw, and also why certain griefs are said to 'reach' the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$. We still speak of a 'touching' spectacle or an appeal that 'reaches' the heart, though we have forgotten the primitive psychology on which the phrases are based.

If we follow up this clue we find that the feelings referred to the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ are always those which belong to that obscure part of us which has most affinity with the dream-consciousness. Such are all strange yearnings and forebodings and grief 'too great for words', as we say. Such, too, is the sense of oppression and gloom which accompanies the feelings of horror and despair, and which is spoken of as a weight of which we seek to lighten our $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$. Anxiety and depression—what we call 'low spirits'—have their seat in the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, and so have all unreasoning terrors and dreads. Strange, overmastering passion, like the love of Phaedra, is once or twice said to attack the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$.² Twice in Sophocles it is the seat of kindly feeling ($\epsilon\upsilon\nuοια$), but that goes rather beyond its ordinary range.³ It is safe to say that the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ is never regarded as having anything to do with clear perception or knowledge, or even with articulate emotion. It remains something mysterious and uncanny, quite apart from our normal consciousness. The gift of prophecy and magical skill are once or twice referred to it, but never thought or character. It is still, therefore, essentially the 'double' of primitive belief, and that is just why it can address us or be addressed by us as if it were something distinct from us. That, of course, became a mannerism or figure of speech, but it was not so at first. The 'soul' of the Watchman in the *Antigone*, which tries to dissuade him from making his report to Creon, can claim kindred with the 'conscience' of Launcelot Gobbo in Shakespeare's *Merchant*.

We shall now be able to see the bearings of some special uses of the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$. It is spoken of, for instance, as the seat of a guilty conscience. That is brought out clearly by a remarkable passage in Antipho,⁴ where he is making his client argue that he would never have come to Athens if he had been conscious of guilt. 'A guiltless $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ will often,' he says, 'preserve both itself and an exhausted body, but a guilty one will leave even a vigorous body in the lurch.' It is from the same point of view that the law of homicide demands the forfeiture of the guilty 'soul' ($\eta\delta\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\sigma\alpha$ or $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\alpha\sigma\alpha\ \psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$),⁵ a phrase in which the use of $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ as the seat

¹ Soph. *El.* 902.

² Eur. *Hipp.* 504, 526.

³ Soph. *O. C.* 498, fr. 98.

⁴ *De caede Herodis*, § 93.

⁵ Antipho, *Tetr.* Γ. α, 7. Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 873 a, 1.

of conscience is combined with its meaning of life as a thing to be lost. Several passages of the tragedians are to be interpreted in the light of this. Aeschylus, indeed, makes the conscience reside in the heart, as was to be expected, but he is emphatic in referring it to the dream-consciousness. It is 'in the night season' that the sore of remorse breaks out.¹ Even the placid Cephalus of Plato's *Republic* is wakened once and again from his sleep by the fear that he may have some sin against gods or men on his conscience.

Another mysterious feeling closely associated with the subconscious element in our life is the sentiment of kinship, what the French call *la voix du sang*. The Greeks, too, usually spoke of blood in this connexion, but Clytemnestra in Sophocles addresses Electra as 'born of my $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ',² and occasionally near kinsmen are spoken of as having 'one soul' instead of 'one blood'.

Finally, we must notice a curious and particularly instructive use of the word, which we know to have been derived from popular language. The $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ is the seat of wayward moods and appetites, and especially of those unaccountable longings for certain kinds of food and drink which sometimes emerge from the more irrational and uncontrolled part of our nature. The Cyclops in Euripides, who has not tasted human flesh for ever so long, says he will do his $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ a good turn by eating Odysseus up.³ Even Aeschylus does not disdain to make the ghost of Darius advise the Persian elders to 'give their souls some pleasure day by day'.⁴ Just so the Romans said *animo* or *genio indulgere*, and spoke of acting *animi causa*. It is a quaint piece of primitive psychology, and it is certainly convenient to make a 'double', for which you are not strictly responsible, the source of those strange yearnings for good living to which the best of us are subject now and then. The Egyptian *ka* had similar tendencies. Looked at in this way, the $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ is the merely 'animal' element of our nature.

I have now covered practically all the uses of the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the Athenian literature of the fifth century. Even in Lysias, who belongs to the fourth, there is only one instance of the word in any but a traditional sense, which is the more remarkable as he had belonged to the fringe at least of the Socratic circle. The few exceptions I have noted are all of the kind that proves the rule. When Herodotus is discussing the supposed Egyptian origin of the belief in immortality, he naturally uses $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the Orphic sense.⁵

¹ See Headlam, *Agamemnon*, p. 186.

³ Eur. *Cycl.* 340.

² Soph. *El.* 775.

⁴ Aesch. *Pers.* 840.

⁵ Herod. ii. 123.

Hippolytus in Euripides speaks of a 'virgin soul', but he is really an Orphic figure.¹ Otherwise the word is used by Euripides in a purely traditional manner, even in the *Bacchae*. Aeschylus employs it very seldom, and then quite simply. Sophocles, as might be expected, is rather subtler, but I cannot find more than two passages where he really goes beyond the limits I have indicated, and they both occur in one of his latest plays, the *Philoctetes*. Odysseus tells Neoptolemus that he is to 'entrap the $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ of Philoctetes with words',² which seems to imply that it is the seat of knowledge, and Philoctetes speaks of 'the mean soul of Odysseus peering through crannies',³ which seems to imply that it is the seat of character. These instances belong to the very close of the century and anticipate the usage of the next. There is no other place where it is even suggested that the 'soul' has anything to do with knowledge or ignorance, goodness or badness, and to Socrates that was the most important thing about it.

Now, if even the higher poetry observed these limits, we may be sure that popular language did so even more strictly. When urged to 'care for his soul', the plain man at Athens might suppose he was being advised to have a prudent regard for his personal safety, to 'take care of his skin' as we say, or even that he was being recommended to have what is called 'a good time'. If we can trust Aristophanes, the words would suggest to him that he was to 'mind his ghost'. The *Birds* tell us how Pisander came to Socrates 'wanting to see the $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ that had deserted him while still alive', where there is a play on the double meaning 'courage' and 'ghost'. Socrates is recognized as the authority on $\psi\upsilon\chiαί$, who 'calls spirits' ($\psi\upsilon\chiαγωγει$) from the deep.⁴ The inmates of his thought-factory ($\phi\rho\nu\tauιστήριον$) are derisively called 'wise $\psi\upsilon\chiαί$ ' in the *Clouds*.⁵ It is true that once in Aristophanes we hear of 'crafty souls' ($\deltaόλιαι \psi\upsilon\chiαί$), which reminds us of the *Philoctetes*; but the speaker is an oracle-monger from Oreos, so that is another exception that proves the rule.⁶ We may, I think, realize the bewilderment which the teaching of Socrates would produce, if we think of the uncomfortable feeling often aroused by the English words 'ghost' and 'ghostly' in their old sense of 'spirit' and 'spiritual'. There is something not altogether reassuring in the phrase 'ghostly admonition'.

¹ Eur. *Hipp.* 1006.

² Soph. *Phil.* 1013.

³ Arist. *Clouds* 94.

⁴ Soph. *Phil.* 55.

⁵ Arist. *Birds* 1555 sqq.

⁶ Arist. *Peace* 1068.

XI

The novelty of this Socratic use of the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ is also indicated by the curiously tentative phrases he is sometimes made to substitute for it, phrases like 'Whatever it is in us that has knowledge or ignorance, goodness or badness'.¹ On the same principle I should explain the reference of Alcibiades in the *Symposium* to 'the heart or soul or whatever we ought to call it'.² Such fine historical touches are much in Plato's way, and the hesitation of Alcibiades is natural if Socrates was the first to use the word like this. He denied, if I am not mistaken, that the soul was any sort of mysterious second self, and identified it frankly with our ordinary consciousness; but, on the other hand, he held it to be more than it seemed to be, and therefore to require all the 'care' that the votaries of Orpheus bade men give to the fallen god within them. No doubt it is open to any one to maintain that, even so, Socrates was not really original. He only combined the Orphic doctrine of the purification of the fallen soul with the scientific view of the soul as the waking consciousness. That is a favourite device of those who make it their business to depreciate the originality of great men. Against it it may be urged that the power of transfusing the apparently disparate is exactly what is meant by originality. The religious and the scientific view might have gone on indefinitely side by side, as we find them in fact simply juxtaposed in Empedocles. It took a Socrates to see that they were complementary, and by uniting them to reach the idea best rendered in English by the old word 'spirit'. In that sense and to that extent he was the founder of philosophy. ✓

From the *Apology* alone it may, I feel sure, be inferred that to Socrates the immortality of the soul followed as a necessary corollary from this view of its nature, but the important thing to notice is that this was not the point from which he started nor that upon which he chiefly dwelt. If, for a moment, I may go beyond the *Apology* and *Crito* for a negative argument, it is not a little remarkable that, both in the *Phaedo*³ and the *Republic*⁴, Plato represents the closest intimates of Socrates as startled by his profession of belief in immortality. It does not seem, then, that this formed the ordinary theme of his discourse. What he did preach as the one thing needful for the soul was that it should strive after wisdom and goodness.

¹ Cf. *Crito* 47 e, 8 ὅτι ποτ' ἐστὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων, περὶ ὃ ἢ τε ἀδικία καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐστίν.

² *Symp.* 218 a, 3 τὴν καρδίαν γὰρ ἢ ψυχὴν ἢ ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸ ὀνομάσαι κτλ.

³ Plato, *Phaed.* 70 a, 1 sqq.

⁴ Plato, *Rep.* 608 d, 3.

Of course, Maier is compelled by the evidence he admits as valid to recognize that Socrates called his work in life 'philosophy', but he holds that this philosophy consisted solely in the application of the dialectical method to moral exhortation. That is why he says Socrates was no philosopher in the strict sense of the word. If he only means that he did not expound a system in a course of lectures, that is doubtless true; but, even at the worst of times, philosophy never meant merely that to the Greeks. It is not correct either to say that the wisdom of which Socrates is made to speak in the *Apology* and *Crito* was merely practical wisdom. At this point Maier makes a bad mistake by importing the Aristotelian distinction between *φρόνησις* and *σοφία* into the discussion. No doubt that distinction has its value, but at this date *φρόνησις* and *σοφία* were completely synonymous terms, and they continued to be used quite promiscuously by Plato. It is wisdom and truth (*φρόνησις καὶ ἀλήθεια*) that the soul is to aim at, and it is an anachronism to introduce the Aristotelian idea of 'practical truth'. If the word *φρόνησις* is on the whole preferred to *σοφία*, it is only because the latter had rather bad associations, like our 'cleverness'. It is hardly worth while, however, to waste words on this point; for the Socratic doctrine that Goodness is knowledge amounts to a denial that there is any ultimate distinction between theory and practice.

XII

The conditions of our experiment did not allow us to admit much evidence, and that seemed at first rather unpromising. Nevertheless, we have been able to reach a result of the first importance, which must now be stated precisely. We have found that, if the *Apology* is to be trusted in a matter of the kind, Socrates was in the habit of exhorting his fellow-citizens to 'care for their souls'. That is admitted by Maier. We have seen further that such an exhortation implies a use of the word *ψυχή* and a view of the soul's nature quite unheard of before the time of Socrates. The Orphics, indeed, had insisted on the need of purging the soul, but for them the soul was not the normal personality;¹ it was a stranger from another world that dwelt in us for a time. The Ionian cosmologists had certainly identified the soul with our waking consciousness, but that too came to us from outside. As Diogenes of Apollonia put it,

¹ The doctrine of *παλιγγενεσία* or transmigration, in its usual form, implies this dissociation of the 'soul' from the rest of the personality. For this reason, I do not believe that Socrates accepted it *in that sense*.

it was a 'small fragment of god',¹ by which he meant a portion of the cosmical 'air' which happens for the time being to animate our bodies. Socrates, so far as we could see, was the first to say that the normal consciousness was the true self, and that it deserved all the care bestowed on the body's mysterious tenant by the religious. The jests of Aristophanes made it plain that Socrates was known as a man who spoke strangely of the soul before 423 B. C., and this takes us back to a time when Plato was not five years old, so that there can be no question of him as the author of the view he ascribes to Socrates. We may fairly conclude, I think, that the 'wisdom' which so impressed the boy Alcibiades and the impulsive Chaerepho, was just this.

I promised not to go beyond the evidence allowed by Maier, and I must therefore stop on the threshold of the Socratic philosophy. I cannot, however, refrain from suggesting the lines on which further investigation would proceed. In a dialogue written thirty years after the death of Socrates, the *Theaetetus*, Plato makes him describe his method of bringing thoughts to birth in language derived from his mother's calling, and we can prove this to be genuinely Socratic from the evidence of Aristophanes who had made fun of it more than half a century before.² The maieutic method in turn involves the theory of knowledge mythically expressed in the doctrine of Reminiscence. The doctrine of Love, which Socrates in the *Symposium* professes to have learnt from Diotima, is only an extension of the same line of thought, and it may be added that it furnishes the natural explanation of his mission. If Socrates really held that the soul was irresistibly driven to go beyond itself in the manner there described, there was no need of an oracle from Delphi to make him take up the task of converting the Athenians. That, however, is transgressing the limits I had imposed on myself, and I do not wish to prejudice what I believe to be the solid result we have reached. That in itself is enough to show that it is of very little consequence whether we call Socrates a philosopher in the proper sense or not; for we now see how it is due to him that, in Julian's words, 'all who find salvation in philosophy are being saved even now.' That is the problem we set out to solve. I only wished to throw out a few hints to show that Maier would have to write another 600 pages at least to exhaust the implications of his own admissions. Some of us will prefer to think it has been better done already by Plato.

¹ A. 19. Diels, μικρὸν μέρος τοῦ θεοῦ.

² Arist. *Clouds* 137.

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